

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS EIR

This Environmental Impact Report (EIR) has been prepared by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) pursuant to the applicable provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its implementing guidelines (CEQA Guidelines). The CPUC is the lead agency for this EIR, which examines the overall effects of Southern California Gas Company's (SCG) Application (A.99-05-029) for authorization under Public Utilities Code Section 851 to Sell Surplus Property at Playa del Rey (PDR) and Marina del Rey (MDR) (referred to throughout this document as the "project," "proposed sale," or "proposed project") for the 34 lots in PDR and 2 lots in MDR (referred to throughout this document as the "project site" or "project area"), located in the city of Los Angeles, California.

An Initial Study, which analyzed the foreseeable consequences of the project, was completed for in September 2003. This study determined that although the actual sale of the property has little or no environmental consequences, it is reasonable foreseeable that there could be potentially significant impacts in the areas of air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, public health, public safety, hydrology and water quality, noise, transportation and traffic, and utilities and service systems resulting from the connected action of the development of urban land uses consistent with existing zoning and adjacent land uses. The Initial Study also found that impacts to aesthetics, agricultural resources, energy, land use, mineral resources, population and housing, public services, and recreation would be less than significant; therefore, these environmental topic areas are not further addressed in this EIR. CEQA requires that, before a decision can be made to approve a project with potentially significant environmental effects, an EIR must be prepared that fully describes the environmental effects of the project. The EIR is a public informational document for use by governmental agencies and the public. It is intended to identify and evaluate potential environmental consequences of the proposed project, to identify mitigation measures that would lessen or avoid significant adverse impacts, and to examine feasible alternatives to the project. The information contained in the EIR is reviewed and considered by the lead agency prior to its action to approve, disapprove, or modify the proposed project.

CEQA states that the lead agency, the CPUC, shall neither approve nor implement a project as proposed unless the significant environmental effects of that project have been reduced to a less-than-significant level and all feasible mitigation measures have been imposed, essentially "eliminating, avoiding, or substantially lessening" its expected impacts. If the lead agency approves the project despite residual significant adverse impacts that cannot be mitigated to less-

than-significant levels, the agency must state the reasons for its action in writing. This “Statement of Overriding Considerations” must be included in the record of project approval.

This EIR has been prepared to inform the CPUC, responsible agencies, trustee agencies, and the public of the proposed project’s environmental effects. The EIR is intended to publicly disclose those impacts that may be significant and adverse, describe the possible measures that would mitigate or avoid such impacts, and describe a reasonable range of alternatives to the project. Figures depicting the proposed project are contained herein; although necessarily conceptual in nature, these figures illustrate the major characteristics of the project.

## 1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

SCG has submitted its application to the CPUC to sell surplus land associated with 36 lots in PDR and MDR with an approximate total acreage of 4.7 acres. The 34 undeveloped lots located in PDR are grouped into eleven lot clusters of one to eight lots. The two MDR lots represent a single cluster and are located approximately two miles north of PDR. SCG proposes to sell the lots “as-is” without any requirements for future development on the lots. Subsurface and mineral rights would be retained by SCG and would not be included in the sale. Twelve of the lots each contain an abandoned gas well. These twelve abandoned wells were once used by SCG as observation or monitoring wells for SCG’s PDR Gas Storage Facility. Under the proposed sale, SCG would sell these undeveloped lots to four different already-approved buyers. It is anticipated that one buyer would purchase a single lot, while the other three would acquire the remaining 35 lots.

## 1.3 APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

As explained more fully in Section 4a, *Approach to Analysis*, the project itself, transfer of property ownership of the 36 PDR and MDR lots from SCG to new owners, would not directly result in any significant environmental impacts. However, this EIR analyzes the reasonably foreseeable associated impacts of development of urban land uses consistent with existing zoning and adjacent land uses, resulting from the sale of these lots.

In order to be able to accurately assess the potential environmental impacts of the proposed sale and its reasonably foreseeable future development, a series of studies were conducted. **Table 1-1** provides a chronological summary of the studies that were conducted; the results of which were used to evaluate potential environmental impacts in this Draft EIR. The results of these studies are further explained in Sections 4.E, *Geology and Soils*, 4.F, *Public Health*, and 4.G, *Public Safety*.

While the CPUC, the lead agency for the project, does not have the authority to impose and enforce mitigation measures associated with the construction and occupancy of possible future buildings on the lots, this EIR identifies potential impacts that could occur and provides recommended mitigation measures that could and should be applied by other responsible agencies during subsequent environmental review and approval processes for specific future projects on the lots proposed for sale as they occur.

**TABLE 1-1**  
**CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY OF STUDIES CONDUCTED**

<b>Time Period</b>	<b>Investigator</b>	<b>Area of Environmental Concern</b>	<b>Purpose of Investigation</b>	<b>Findings</b>
2000-2001	Giroux & Associates	Methane Hazards	Initial methane migration investigation conducted at Cluster 3 and Cluster 12	No clear methane risks identified. However, the study concluded that the results could not be considered representative of all lots.
2001	Giroux & Associates	Air Quality; Odors	To characterize the background levels of hydrogen sulfide (as source of odor) in the study area. Daily samples taken over five days.	Minimal indication of odors except near storm drains.
2000-2001	URS	Air Quality at PDR	Characterization of baseline air quality for methane, and THC.	Concentrations were low in general and within expected ranges for Los Angeles
2001	URS	Air Toxics	Monitored BTEX	Monitoring was performed during SCG PDR venting activities and no correlation was observed in the data.
2003	Methane Specialists and Sullivan Consulting	Methane; Odors	Surface sweep of all lots to determine if any methane was observed at ground level.	Concentrations were either non-detects or very low readings. No odors were detected.
2003-2004	Brown and Caldwell	Health hazards	Make detailed measurements of soil contamination and soil gas on all lots as well as groundwater at Cluster 12. Provide data for the health risk assessment. Repeat measurements over eight months to confirm results.	Sampling confirmed generally low levels of contaminants in most cluster soils. A health risk assessment utilizing these data shows no significant human health risk exists at the clusters.
2003-2004	Methane Specialists	Methane hazards	Working in concert with Brown and Caldwell, make subsurface methane measurements on the lots to determine if any existing methane hazards exist. If methane was measured, to determine the source of methane.	Methane was routinely detected at Cluster 11 below ground level. The source of this methane was attributed to be from decomposition of contaminated soils from historical oil exploration; not from SCG storage gas.
2004	Brown and Caldwell	Health hazards	Determine whether the “fifty-foot gravel layer” at Cluster 12 is presence or not.	Layer not found but clay layer identified at 55 feet would minimize vertical migration methane in the area.
2004	Gary Boettcher Consulting	Odors	Determine the levels in PDR of hydrogen sulfide odors over an extended time period.	While some interesting trends were observed in the data, the values are consistent with typical values for Los Angeles and do not appear to be correlated to SCG activities.

## 1.4 RANGE OF ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines 15126.6(a) requires that a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any significant effects of the project, be discussed in an EIR. This EIR identifies and analyzes such a range of alternatives; discusses the environmental effects of each alternative; compares the environmental effects of each alternative with existing conditions and with impacts of the proposed project; and addresses the relationship of each alternative to the project objectives. The determinations of the CPUC concerning the feasibility, acceptance, or rejection of the alternatives considered in this EIR will be addressed and resolved in the CPUC's findings, as required by CEQA. The alternatives consist of the following:

- Alternative 1: No Project
- Alternative 2: Partial Sale – Exclude Cluster 9
- Alternative 3: Partial Sale – Exclude Cluster 12

For a discussion of the components, basis for selection, and impacts of these alternatives see Chapter 5, *Alternatives*.

## 1.5 USE OF THIS EIR

The CPUC has directed the preparation of this EIR, in conjunction with other information to be developed in the CPUC's formal record, to act on SCG's application under Public Utilities Code Section 851 to sell surplus property in PDR and MDR. In accordance with CEQA requirements, the CPUC will determine the adequacy of the Final EIR and, if adequate, will certify the document. The CPUC has assigned Administrative Law Judge Carol Brown to oversee the proceeding and Commissioner Carl Wood as the Assigned Commissioner for the Section 851 application.

This EIR provides environmental information and evaluation which other state and responsible agencies may rely on to make informed decisions over issuance of specific permits related to the potential future development on the 36 lots proposed for sale. For example, any future construction or active uses of the lots that would occur after the proposed sale would require approval from the City of Los Angeles. In addition to city building applications, permits and approvals may be necessary from the following agencies:

- Division of Oil, Gas & Geothermal Resources (DOGGR)
- South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD)
- City of Los Angeles
- County of Los Angeles
- California Occupational Health and Safety Administration (Cal/OSHA)
- Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)

Furthermore, this EIR also provides environmental information upon which to base consideration of each of the alternatives to the project identified above.

## 1.6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

CEQA and the CPUC encourage public participation in the planning and environmental review processes. A Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Initial Study for the project was released for public review on September 3, 2003. The CPUC received six comment letters which are included in Appendix A of this EIR.

In addition, opportunities will be provided for the public to present comments and concerns regarding the project and the adequacy of the Draft EIR during a public review and comment period and at public hearings or meetings before the CPUC. Written public comments may be submitted to the CPUC at any time during the public review and comment period, June 4, 2004 through July 19, 2004. Comments on this EIR can be submitted in writing to:

Mr. Michael Rosauer  
CPUC Environmental Project Manager  
c/o Environmental Science Associates  
225 Bush Street, Suite 1700  
San Francisco, CA 94104-4207

Comments can also be submitted via electronic mail at [playadivest@esassoc.com](mailto:playadivest@esassoc.com). To comment verbally, please leave a voice message at (415) 962-8447. In addition, a website for this project has been set up and can be viewed online at <http://www.playadivest.com>.

## 1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THIS DRAFT EIR

The Draft EIR is organized as follows:

**Executive Summary:** Summarizes the changes that would occur as a result of the proposed project, the reasonably foreseeable associated environmental impacts of specific future development of these lots resulting from the sale, the mitigation measures suggested to reduce or eliminate any identified impacts resulting from the sale as well as specific future development, and alternatives to the project.

**Chapter 1, Introduction:** Provides an introduction and overview that describes the proposed sale and the purpose of the Draft EIR, summarizes the Draft EIR review and certification process, and identifies the environmental issues.

**Chapter 2, Summary of Environmental Impacts:** Describes the proposed project, the controversial issues associated with the project, the environmental effects of the project, and alternatives to the project (including the No Project Alternative). Chapter 2 includes Table 2-1, Summary of Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures, which identifies each environmental impact, corresponding recommended mitigation measure(s), and the residual level of significance that would occur if those mitigation measures were implemented.

**Chapter 3, Project Description:** Provides a description of the project sites and their location, the project goals and objectives, the project setting, the project components, and an outline of the approval process.

**Chapter 4, Environmental Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures:** Describes the existing setting, discusses the environmental impacts of the project, and identifies mitigation measures for the environmental impacts examined in this Draft EIR. The issue areas addressed in the EIR are air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, public health, public safety, hydrology and water quality, noise, transportation and traffic, and utilities and service systems.

**Chapter 5, Alternatives Analysis:** Presents an analysis of a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project, presents the environmental impacts associated with each alternative, and compares the relative impacts of each alternative to those of the proposed project.

**Chapter 6, Other CEQA Considerations:** Presents discussions of growth inducing effects, cumulative impacts, and unavoidable significant impacts.

**Chapter 7, Report Preparation and Public Participation:** Lists report preparers and identifies persons and organizations consulted during report preparation.

**Chapter 8, Glossary and Acronyms:** Defines terms and acronyms used in this Draft EIR.